

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 are pending.

Claims 1-4 and 6-8 were rejected.

Claims 5 and 9 were objected to.

Reply to Objections

On page 2, section "1." of the Office Action (Claim Objections), Claim 5 was objected to. Claim 5 has been amended.

The Examiner is requested to reconsider and withdraw the objection to Claim 5.

Art Rejection

Sole Rejection

Claims 1-4, 6-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shimichi (JP 11048856) in view of Nakazawa et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,871,989). This rejection, is traversed.

Nakazawa et al. has an effective date based on its filing date of **December 20, 2002**. The present application has a priority date of **September 24, 2002**. Enclosed is a verified English translation of the foreign priority document. Based on this document, the Nakazawa et al. patent is not a viable reference. Accordingly, the rejection is moot.

For the reasons set forth above, the Examiner is requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 5 and 9 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include limitations of their base claim and any intervening claims. These claims are considered patentable based on their base or intervening claims as the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103 is moot.

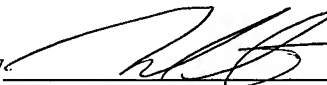
Conclusion

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Maki Hatsumi (Reg. No. 40,417) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: May 5, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment: Verified English Translation of Priority Document - JP 2002-276670